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ABSTRACT

This module on candles is one of eight modules designed to provide instruction on authentic Blue Ridge Mountain crafts to adult basic education students at a low cost. Contents include notes on the history of candle making; process used, including equipment and materials, as well as method described narratively and graphically; and the followup, where the student is told how to progress to higher levels of proficiency. The Fry readability level of this module is 3.0. A teacher's guide which lists resources for each module in the series is available separately (see Note). (MEK)

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SHARING THE ARTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

CANDLES

Conducted By:

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PREFACE

"Sharing the Arts of the Blue Ridge Mountains" is written so you, the AGE student, can learn about mountain arts. There are eight modules. Each module tells about the history of one art. Each module tells how to make a useful item the way mountain craftsmen do.

Crafts used to be a way of life for mountain families. People in the mountains were secluded. Families had to make everything they used. Later, city people wanted to buy these items. A crafts market developed. The mountain people found they could enjoy making things and have an income.

Today many people like to make items. It is a pleasure to make things. People still like to buy handmade items. Thus, there is still a market for items that are interesting to make.

In writing these modules, about 30 artists and craftsmen were interviewed. The craftsmen and artists shared the way they created their crafts. Project staff also visited Hambidge Center at Rabun Gap, Georgia; Berea in Kentucky; and Pi Beta Phi Arrowmont School, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. These schools are three of the ones which teach mountain arts and crafts. They were established to teach the mountain people some of the dying crafts in the early 1900's.

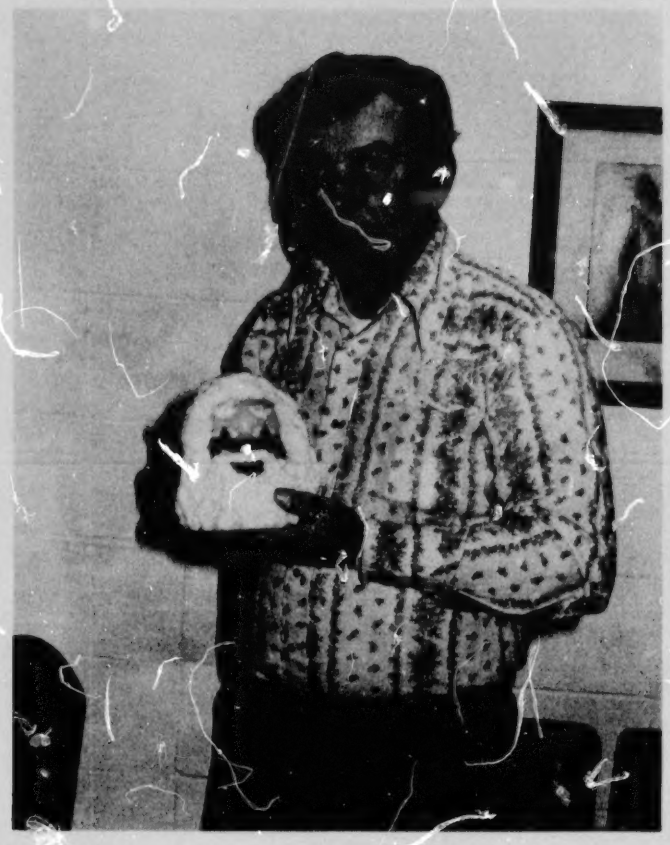
Today these schools, as well as John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, North Carolina, and Penland Institute, Penland, North Carolina, have classes. Many vocational-technical schools also teach crafts. Junior colleges sometimes offer non-credit craft courses. The Cooperative Extension Service holds some craft classes. Later you may want to go to a class at one of these schools.

Bob Nichols of Helen, Georgia, did the art work for this project.

Mr. Joseph (Joe) Kennedy was the special consultant for this module. This project could not have been written without his help. Mr. Kennedy worked with the project staff on techniques and procedures for candle making.

If you want to learn more about the Blue Ridge Mountain area or candle making, your AGE teacher has a list of books and resources.

MR. JOSEPH KENNEDY, Consultant



Mr. Joe Kennedy shows one of his special Christmas candles

Mr. Joseph Kennedy of Helen, Georgia, is known locally as the "Lil' Ole Candlemaker." A relative that had made candles for many years taught Joe and his family about candles. Candles were a hobby for the Kennedy family for many years. Then, people wanted to buy his candles. Candle-making became a business. He has sold his candles at country fairs as well as in his own shops. Decorator candles are a Kennedy speciality. Santa Claus, owl, and floating flower candles are the favorites.

I. ABOUT CANDLE MAKING

Since early times man has used fire for light. At first bonfires were used. Later smaller lights, similar to today's candle, were used. Pictures of candles have been found in Egyptian tombs. Candlestick holders much like those of today have been found. Some date back to 3000 B.C.

Candles have been made of many kinds of materials. During the Middle Ages poor people used rush lights. They dipped rush stems in oil. (Rush is a plant that grows in marshy places.) Candles have also been made from tallow (animal fat) and beeswax. Candleberry (bayberry) was also used. Today most candles are made from paraffin wax. Paraffin is what is left after the processing of petroleum. This was discovered in 1850.

Candles were so expensive in the Middle Ages that only the rich could afford them.

Candles were first made in the home. Later candle makers went from house to house making candles. Today most candles are still made in the home.

Different methods of making candles have developed. Tallow candles were made by dipping a yarn into the melted animal fat. When cool, it was dipped again. This was done until the candle was the right size. Beeswax candles were made by repeatedly pouring melted beeswax over the wick. The finished candle was rolled on a hard surface to make it smooth.

Around 1400, the first candle mold was made. This changed candle making. Candles could now be made in shapes.

Candles have had many uses. They were used to keep time. In England during the 1600's, auctions were begun with the lighting of an

inch high candle. Bidding was closed when the candle burned out.

Candles were also important in religious ceremonies and as decoration.

Through the years candles have been a necessity in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Much of the area has remained very remote. Even today some mountain people do not have electricity. They must rely on candles for their lighting.

WORDS TO KNOW:

1. Duct tape - a heavy cloth tape.
2. Mold - the form that is used to give the candle its shape.
3. Paraffin wax - a type of wax. It is often used for making candles.
4. Wicking - the cord in candles that burns.

II. HOW TO MAKE CANDLES

Making candles is not hard. But it is important to be alert. Be sure to protect yourself and the work area.

Cover the table and floor with newspaper.

The wax will be very hot. If it is splashed on your skin, run cold water over it. Remove the wax and wash the area with a mild soap. If wax splashes on any clothes, scrape off as much as possible. Place a clean cotton cloth over the wax. Heat the spot with a low temperature iron. Use the cloth as a blotter.

Be careful to take the following precautions:

1. Do not spill the wax. Do not splash water into the pot of hot wax.

2. Do not melt the wax over direct heat. Use a double boiler.

3. Never leave wax unattended on the stove.

4. Keep the stove burners clean. Keep the outside of your containers clean.

5. In case of fire, NEVER USE WATER! Put salt or soda on the fire. If possible, put a lid on the pan.

The items needed to make candles are:

1. A double boiler. A seamless pot or can with a bigger pot will do. Use containers with flat bottoms.

2. Stove or hot plate. (Be sure a hot plate has covered coils. Also, it should be controlled by a thermostat.)

3. Candy thermometer.

4. Knife.

5. Scissors.

6. Ice pick (any long thin metal object).

7. Long handled spoon or stick.

8. Cookie sheet.

9. Pouring pot (a pot with a long spout is best. A pot with a lip will do.)

10. Paper to cover floor.

11. Salt or soda to use in case of fire.

12. Pencil or dowel.

The supplies needed are:

1. Paraffin wax - do not use the wax from grocery stores made for canning. Wax can be bought at craft stores. Some wholesale petroleum distributors carry wax.

2. Cooking oil.

3. Candle coloring - this can be bought at art and craft supply shops. (Crayons will color but the colors may not be bright. To use crayons cut them into shavings.)

4. Wicking - flat braided wicking can be bought at a craft dealer. String is not good for wicking. (It is possible to make the wicking. However, it is hard to make good wicking. To make wicking, use about 10 feet of medium sized soft cotton string. Chalk line will do. Dissolve one tablespoon of salt and two tablespoons of borax in one cup of water. Place the string in the cup. Let it soak for 12 hours. Hang the string up to dry for 24 hours. When dry, coat the string by dipping it in melted wax. Now put in under cold water to harden it.)

5. Milk cartons - use quart, pint, or ½ pint sizes.

6. Candle scent (Use only scents sold especially for candles.)

7. Duct tape or Scotch Transparent tape. (Mold sealer can be bought at craft stores. This can be used in place of the tape.)

Figure 1

Now to make the candles. Allow plenty of time to make the candles. Melting the wax will take the longest time. Do not rush it by putting the wax directly on the heat. If the wax gets too hot, it will not be any good.

Put water in the larger pot. Place a chunk of wax in the smaller pot. Now set the small pot in the large pot. Place them on the stove. Be sure the candy thermometer is in the pot with the wax.

While waiting for the wax to melt, cut the tops off of the milk cartons. (Figure 1) Then punch a small hole in the center bottom of the carton with an ice pick. Put the wick through the hole. Loop it on the bottom. Tape the loop down with the tape. (Mold sealer can be used.) Be sure to cover the hole and the wick completely. Now dip the bottom of the carton in wax. (Figure 2) This will seal the hole so the candle wax will not run out.

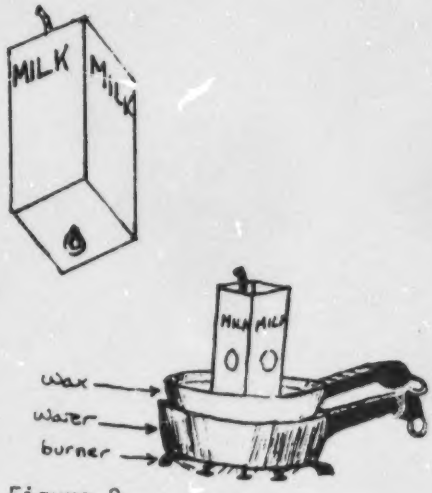


Figure 2

Now, pull the wick to the top of the carton. Wrap the wick around a pencil or small dowel. This is to keep the wick straight in the middle of the candle. Rest the pencil on top of the carton. (Figure 3)

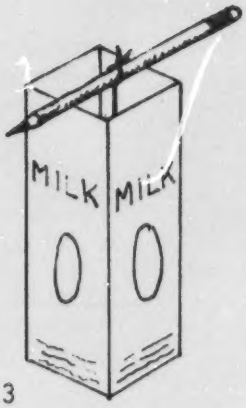


Figure 3

When the wax reaches 180°, you can color the wax. If it is all to be one color, add the color to the big pot. If there will be different colors, pour the wax into several pouring pots. Then, add the color to each pot. Add the scent at this time, also. Again, use only scents sold especially for candle making.

Pour the wax into the mold. Be careful not to move the wick support. Stop pouring immediately if wax begins to leak out. Holding the mold in cold water may stop the leak. Begin with another mold.

To change the design, alternate layers of color. Let the first layer get firm but not cold. Now pour the next color. Corners of the mold can also be tilted. Change the corner with each color. (Figure 4) Pour the last layer with the mold flat.

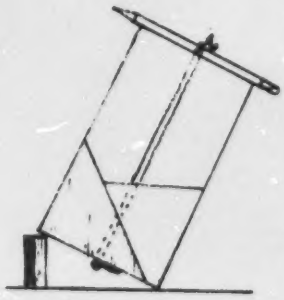


Figure 4

For a solid color candle, pour all the wax at one time. Let the wax get firm but not cold. Now run the ice pick into the candle. Go down beside the wick. This allows air bubbles to escape. Now fill

this hole with hot wax.

As the wax gets hard, it will shrink. This will leave a hole in the candle. When the candle is cooled, pour more wax to make the candle level.

Candles should cool completely. Leave them 24 hours if possible.

Now remove the mold. Slowly and carefully tear the milk carton from the sides. Tear the wax and tape from the bottom. Slide the wick out. The bottom of the mold is now the top of the candle.

Polish any rough spots with a nylon stocking. Minor flaws will be smoothed out. This should also make the candle shiny.

Use all types of other items for molds. Muffin tins, jello molds and drink cups are good. If anything other than a wax lined container is used, lightly grease the inside of the mold with cooking oil. Wipe the excess oil out with a paper towel. The oil lets the candle slide out of the mold easily. Use a metal wick tab if you can not punch a hole in the bottom of the mold. These can be bought at most craft supply stores. They are inexpensive.

Try decorating the candles. Take a small amount of liquid wax and beat it until

it is foamy. Put this on the outside of the candle. Try sprinkling this with glitter.

Molds in all shapes can be bought.

III. WHAT NEXT?

If you like candlemaking, you will want to do more research on the types of wax and how to use each type.

Also, you will want to learn about sculpturing candles with a small propane torch. Sand casting candles and making ice candles, etc. are interesting. There is a variety of types of candles.

Candlemaking books will tell more about polishing and smoothing your candles. Also, they explain how to make soft wax harder. Some explain how to put flowers, shells, or other items in candles as decorations.

Most people like candles. You may find there is a market in your community for selling them.

If you are interested in selling some candles, you might want to place some of your candles in a shop in your community. This will test the market for them. William Webster in his book, "The Complete Book of Candlemaking," discusses in detail how to market your candles.

Other books may be of help to you in learning about candlemaking. Your Adult Education teacher has a list of books.

Places to get more information on candle making:

Adult Education teacher.

Local Cooperative Extension Service office.

Library.

Arts and Crafts stores.

Places to get candle making supplies:

American Handicrafts. 3 Tandy Center, Forthworth, Texas 76102. (Write for catalogue)

American Handicraft Company. 4166 Buford Highway, Buford Clairmont Center, Atlanta, Georgia 30345.

Nasco Arts and Crafts. 901 Janesville Avenue, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin 53538. (Write for catalogue)

Your local petroleum (gasoline) wholesaler. (wax)

Most arts and crafts stores.